

**“Taken from House Conference Report 105-405  
FY 1998 House Report...”**

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STANDARDS AND TECHNOLOGY  
SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL RESEARCH AND SERVICES**

The conference agreement includes \$276,852,000 for the internal (core) research account of the National Institute of Standards and Technology as proposed in the Senate and House bills.

The conference agreement provides \$268,052,000 for the core research programs within NIST, the same amount provided in fiscal year 1997, in accordance with the distribution in the fiscal year 1997 conference report. Such distribution should be used as a basis for reprogramming of funds for activities provided in this account. In addition, the conferees concur with the recommendation included in the Senate report regarding funding for the Malcolm Baldrige Award, and thus have provided no funds for expansion of this program to other areas in fiscal year 1998, as such expansion would result in reductions in core NIST activities.

Further, in light of recent wind related disasters in the southwest United States which have resulted in significant loss of life and property, the conference agreement includes \$3,800,000 in the bill for research to be conducted at Texas Tech University on protective structures and other technologies which are designed to save lives threatened by tornadoes and severe wind storms. Texas Tech is uniquely positioned to conduct this research because of its nationally recognized interdisciplinary wind engineering program and its location in a region which has experienced repeated wind disasters. In addition, the conference agreement also includes \$5,000,000 for a cooperative agreement with Montana State University for research on building products, processes and technologies which utilize underused natural resources and environmentally sound technologies. The conferees direct that funds provided for these two activities shall not be used for the design or construction of facilities.

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### **INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY SERVICES**

The conference agreement includes \$306,000,000 for the NIST external research account instead of \$298,600,000 as proposed in the House bill and \$311,040,000 as proposed in the Senate bill.

Manufacturing Extension Partnership Program- The conference agreement includes \$113,500,000 for the Manufacturing Extension Partnership Program (MEP) as proposed in the House bill, instead of \$111,040,000 as proposed in the Senate bill. Of these amounts, \$103,000,000 is for continued support for all existing Regional Centers, including the rollover costs of the remaining Centers originally funded under the Defense Department's Technology Reinvestment Program, as well as those Centers which have reached their statutory six-year time limit; \$2,000,000 is for continuation of the existing SBDC-manufacturing field offices; and \$8,500,000 is for management and administration. The conference agreement does not include any funds for special projects related to supply chain optimization, information technology, and technology infusion. While these projects are worthwhile, the conferees are concerned that these programs are not required to meet the same requirements as the Regional Centers program, including cost share requirements. Given that many of these projects are targeted to selected industry sectors and problems, the conferees expect that MEP Centers should be able to obtain the funds for these purposes from local, State, or private-sector sources.

The conference agreement also contains language, included in the Senate bill, that extends for one year NIST's support for the Regional Centers beyond the statutory six-year period, subject to certain conditions. The House bill contained no extension. The conferees note that this program, as well as other NIST programs, have remained unauthorized for a number of years. The House most recently passed NIST authorization legislation (H.R.1274) earlier this year which would waive the statutory sunset on manufacturing centers. The Senate has not passed a companion bill. The conferees had hoped that an authorization bill would be enacted prior to fiscal year 1998, obviating the need to address this issue in the appropriations bill. As stated in the fiscal year 1997 conference report, the

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conferees continue to believe this issue is best addressed through the authorization process. Therefore, while the conferees have included a one-year waiver of the sunset requirement to bridge the gap until a NIST authorization is enacted, the conferees fully expect enactment of appropriate authorization legislation prior to fiscal year 1999, and thus do not plan to continue waiving such sunset requirements through the appropriations process. In addition, the conferees direct the Secretary of Commerce to review this program and provide recommendations to the Committees for assisting the Regional Centers to become self-supporting after their sixth year of operation, and expect a report from the Secretary to be submitted with the fiscal year 1999 budget submission.

Advanced Technology Program- The conference agreement includes \$192,500,000 for the Advanced Technology Program (ATP), instead of \$185,100,000 as proposed in the House bill and \$200,000,000 as proposed in the Senate bill. The recommendation provides the following distribution for fiscal year 1998 funds: (1) \$68,000,000 for continuation of prior year awards made using funds provided in fiscal years 1996 and 1997; (2) \$82,000,000 for new awards in fiscal year 1998; and (3) \$42,500,000 for administration, internal NIST lab support and Small Business Innovation Research requirements. In addition, language is included in the bill designating the amounts available for new ATP awards, similar to language included in the House bill.

**CONSTRUCTION OF RESEARCH FACILITIES**

The conference agreement provides \$95,000,000 for construction, renovation and maintenance of NIST facilities, instead of \$111,092,000 as proposed in the House bill, and \$16,000,000 included in the Senate bill.

The conferees concur in the direction included in the House report regarding the development of a long-term facilities plan for NIST which includes maintenance, rehabilitation and new construction requirements, and have included bill language making \$78,308,000 of the funds provided in this account available upon submission of a spending plan which corresponds to NIST's long-term facilities plan.